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CHAPTER 3. CONTINUING EDUCATION FIELD UNITS

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CHAPTER 3. CONTINUING EDUCATION FIELD UNITS

3.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the Continuing Education Field Units and their role in providing continuing education for VHS&RA staff. The CE Field Units include two CECs (Continuing Education Centers), seven RMECs (Regional Medical Education Centers), eight CHEPs (Cooperative Health Manpower Education Programs), two DEC's (Dental Education Centers), and the ETC (Engineering Training Center).

3.02 ADMINISTRATION

a. The Continuing Education Programs Service, Office of Academic Affairs, is responsible for the operations of Continuing Education Field Units. All communications regarding the operation of these units are sent to the ACMD for Academic Affairs (145). The Continuing Education Programs Service (145) is responsible for administering and coordinating CE Field Unit programs. This responsibility includes:

- (1) Developing annual budgets and staffing patterns;
- (2) Determining educational needs and programming;
- (3) Coordinating activities to assure that systemwide needs are being met, that programs are directed toward identified educational needs, and that duplication of effort is avoided; and,
- (4) Providing technical assistance and direction on matters pertaining to VHS&RA policies and procedures.

b. OAA and CE Field Units have defined administrative and reporting arrangements with VA medical centers within which they are located. The CEC, RMEC, and DEC Directors report directly to the ACMD for Academic Affairs, although they are located in "host medical centers" which provide space and administrative support. Professional leadership is provided by the ACMD for Academic Affairs for the CEC and RMECs; from the ACMD for Dentistry for the DEC's. The CHEP and ETC Directors report to the Directors of VA medical centers in which they are located for administrative purposes. Professional leadership for the CHEPs is provided by the ACMD for Academic Affairs and for the ETC by the Director, VA Central Office Facilities Engineering Service.¹

c. A RMEC Council advises the ACMD for Academic Affairs on continuing education policies and practices and coordinates joint RMEC and CEC operations and practices. The council membership is:

- (1) Two permanent members from each RMEC and CEC: the Director and a designee, and
- (2) Two non-voting members from the Office of Academic Affairs.

¹Direction of the ETC is the responsibility of Engineering Service, with Academic Affairs providing technical assistance regarding continuing education.

The Council elects a chairperson from among the Directors every 3 years and meets at least twice each fiscal year. Minutes of each meeting are published by the chairperson.

3.03 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All CE Field Units participate in the following systems:

- a. The Continuing Education Field Unit Reporting System which provides financial and administrative information;
- b. The CAR (CE Field Unit Activity Report) which records program activity and participant data; and
- c. The COP (Cost, Output, and Productivity Report) which provides cost/activity information.

3.04 CONTINUING EDUCATION FIELD UNITS

a. CECs (Continuing Education Centers)

The CECs, located at VA Medical Centers, Washington, DC and St. Louis, MO coordinate and develop continuing education activities to address needs which are national in scope. They plan, implement, evaluate, and coordinate educational interventions that are not confined to a single RMEC region. They also administer a coordinated program of continuing education for rehabilitation personnel.

b. RMECs (Regional Medical Education Centers)

(1) Title 38, United States Code, sections 4121-4124, authorize the establishment of RMECs. RMECs provide continuing education opportunities for VHS&RA staff employed at VA medical centers in their regions. Each RMEC serves medical centers within a given region. The seven RMECs and their host facilities are:

- 1) Northport RMEC, VA Medical Center, Northport, NY (Region 1)
- (Region 3) Durham RMEC, VA Medical Center, Durham, NC (Region 3)
Birmingham RMEC, VA Medical Center, Birmingham, AL
- 2) Cleveland RMEC, VA Medical Center, Cleveland, OH (Region 2)
- (Region 2) Minneapolis RMEC, VA Medical Center, Minneapolis, MN
- (Region 4) Long Beach RMEC, VA Medical Center, Long Beach, CA
- UT (Region 4) Salt Lake City RMEC, VA Medical Center, Salt Lake City, UT (Region 4)

(2) RMECs provide and support continuing education opportunities for VHS&RA career personnel, supplementing and complementing facility-directed CE programs. While the legislation authorizing RMECs is designed specifically to provide education for VHS&RA career personnel, non-VA medical and health care personnel may, on a space available and cost reimbursable basis, attend RMEC programs.

(3) Each RMEC is responsible for designing, developing, implementing, and supporting continuing education programs in its region. RMECs conduct needs

identification and analyses to guide the development of educational offerings; they provide educational activities (e.g., conferences and workshops), products (mediated materials), and services (e.g., consultation regarding educational needs assessment, design, and evaluation) to meet identified needs; and they determine the impact of continuing education projects.

(4) A RMEC liaison representative is appointed by each VHS&RA field facility to coordinate RMEC/VAMC activities and serve as the primary contact for the facility. The liaison representative is the person responsible for the coordination of continuing education for health care personnel in the medical center (ACOS/E, Education Coordinator, etc.)

(5) The RMECs administer VA Medical Center Initiated Program which provides VA medical centers with funds and assistance to meet some education and training needs locally. Individual medical centers, clusters of medical centers, medical centers comprising a medical district, and independent outpatient clinics are eligible to participate in the program. Each RMEC announces the program to its region and establishes guidelines for proposal submission.

c. CHEPs (Cooperative Health Manpower Education Programs)

(1) CHEPs are authorized by 38 U.S.C. 5054(c) which provides that VA may enter into agreements with public and nonprofit private institutions, organizations, corporations, and other entities in order to participate in cooperative health care personnel education programs within the geographic area of any VA health care facility located in an area remote from major academic health centers. Such CHEPs serve remote VA medical centers and work with local health care organizations to promote and provide educational activities for health professionals through cooperative sharing arrangements. There are currently eight CHEPs located at VA Medical Centers in Togus, Maine; Saginaw, Michigan; Erie, Pennsylvania; Tuskegee, Alabama; Lincoln, Nebraska; Boise, Idaho; Dublin, Georgia; and Fort Meade, South Dakota.

(2) CHEPs work through consortium arrangements with community educational and health care institutions under their own administrative structures. It is recommended that the administrative authority be vested by member institutions in an executive committee and delegated to a full-time coordinator.

(3) Activities of individual CHEPs are determined locally and reflect the identified health care personnel needs and available resources of the community. They are designed to achieve the following:

(a) Development of cooperative working relationships and resource sharing mechanisms among VA medical center and community health and education organizations;

(b) Provision of undergraduate and graduate health professions education and continuing education programs to meet health care personnel needs of the area; and

(c) Coordination of the educational programs and activities of the host VA medical facility.

d. DECs (Dental Education Centers)

Two DECs, located at VA Medical Centers in Washington, DC (DEC/East) and West Los Angeles, CA (DEC/West), provide continuing education opportunities for professional and technical VA dental staff, to maintain and upgrade their capabilities, and to ensure that they stay abreast of the latest developments in dental care. The DECs produce a variety of educational programs, including in residence short courses and workshops and

facility-based activities. Dental Services are sent brochures for upcoming courses. In addition, there is a yearly announcement of the opportunity to co-sponsor facility-based programs.

e. ETC (Engineering Training Center)

The ETC, located at VA Medical Center, Little Rock, AK, provides continuing education programs for Engineering Service staff systemwide. Short courses and correspondence courses are designed to keep employees up-to-date with engineering and technological developments in health care and to improve and maintain their technical and management skills. A major concern of the ETC is the development, implementation, and evaluation of educational activities for biomedical engineers. Programs also are designed for other Engineering Service personnel, including engineer officers and their assistants, staff engineers, safety engineers, technicians, and craftsmen. Annual course listings, distributed throughout the system, are supplemented by program brochures and telegraphic messages announcing special offerings.